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Promoting and facilitating the implementation of the proposals for action of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests, and reviewing, monitoring and reporting on progress in the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests

Matters left pending and other issues arising from the programme elements of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests process

Letter dated 23 December 1999 from the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the Tehran Declaration (see annex I) and the report of the Open-ended International Meeting of Experts on the Special Needs and Requirements of Developing Countries with Low Forest Cover and Unique Types of Forests (see annex II), a Government-led initiative in support of the programme of work of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests, which was held in Tehran from 4 to 8 October 1999.

I should be grateful if the text of the present letter and its annexes could be distributed as a document of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests at its fourth session.

(*Signed*) Hadi Nejad **Hosseinian**

* E/CN.17/IFF/2000/1.

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Annex I

Tehran Declaration

Experts from countries with low forest cover met for the first time in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, from 4 to 8 October 1999, and discussed their common concerns. The meeting was supported by the governments of Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany and Norway, and organized with the collaboration of the governments of Egypt and Sudan and in cooperation with international organizations, including FAO, UNEP, UNDP and IFAD. During the 5-day international Meeting of Experts on the Special Needs and Requirements of Developing Countries with Low Forest Cover and Unique Types of Forests, a government-led initiative in support of the programme of work of Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF), participants from 39 countries and 6 international and bilateral organizations addressed a wide range of issues. The experts noted that several hundred million people, in over 70 developing countries with low forest cover, live in and around forests and depend on them for their subsistence. The participants recognized that increased population pressure and widespread poverty are resulting in an alarming rate of deforestation and forest degradation. The consequent loss of productivity and biological diversity is affecting human well-being. The meeting underscored the urgent need to undertake corrective actions to revere this negative trend.

The experts reviewed the existing literature and instruments, and relevant international/intergovernmental deliberations on forests, including the IPF/IFF process, in the context of meeting the special human needs and requirements of developing low forest cover countries (LFCCs). In addressing the objectives of the expert meeting, the participants adopted a report containing a set of conclusions and a number of short- and long-term concrete and practical recommendations.

With the overall framework of global collective endeavors for management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests, the participants emphasized that the long-term objectives include, inter alia, placing the issue of low forest cover countries on the political and policy agenda of future international deliberations on forests and other development issues, including combating desertification, and formulating long-term approaches and strategies. Priority should be given to enhanced cooperation among LFCCs, partnerships with multilateral organizations and instruments as well as with the donor community.

The meeting endorsed the proposal to launch a process, hereafter called the "Tehran Process", in order to achieve these collective objectives and to pursue the implementation and further development of the outcome of the Tehran meeting. The participants reaffirmed their commitment to the objectives of the "Tehran Process" and reiterated the necessity of active, cooperation and consistent follow-up of the final outcome of the Tehran meeting aimed at fulfilling critical human needs in low forest cover countries. They expressed their full support to the prospective Iranian endeavors towards continuing the "Process". They further agreed to hold the first follow-up meeting of the "Tehran Process" to be held at the sidelines of the fourth session of the IFF in early February 2000 in New York.

Annex II

Report of the Open-ended International Meeting of Experts on the Special Needs and Requirements of Developing Countries with Low Forest Cover and Unique Types of Forests

I INTRODUCTION

1. The Open-ended international meeting of experts on *Special Needs and Requirements of Developing Countries with Low Forest Cover and Unique Types of Forests*, a government-led initiative in support of the programme of work of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF), was held in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, from 4 to 8 October 1999. The meeting was sponsored by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, with the support of the governments of Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany and Norway, and organized with the collaboration of the governments of Egypt and Sudan, and in cooperation with international organizations, including FAO, UNEP, UNDP and IFAD. 77 participants from 39 countries and 6 international and bilateral organizations and NGOs attended the meeting. This summary report reflects the range of views of experts who participated in the discussions in their personal capacity.

2. The initiative was organized as a follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), held in Rio de Janeiro, June 1992, including the Rio Declaration, the "Forest Principles," Agenda 21, Chapter 11", the proposals for action of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) and the deliberations of the IFF.

3. The meeting was the first of its kind to address issues specifically concerning developing countries with low forest cover and unique types of forest, including the special needs and requirements of millions of people that live in and around them.

4. The short-term objectives of the meeting were to:

- identify factors contributing to low forest cover, as well as the special needs and requirements of developing low forest cover countries (LFCCs)
- exchange views on key issues affecting developing LFCCs;
- contribute to the deliberations at the fourth session of the IFF, in particular by providing the perspective of developing LFCCs, in the consideration of options for future international arrangements and mechanisms.

5. The long-term objectives of the meeting were to:

- Initiate a process towards placing the issue of low forest cover on the political and policy agenda of future international forest policy deliberations;
- foster national forest programmes in all LFCCs, and promote regional and sub-regional arrangements for the exchange of experience and for support to national processes, in partnership with the international donor community
- establish linkages between action by LFCCs and the objectives of the three UNCED global environmental conventions (CCD, CBD, FCCC) as well as other relevent multilateral organizations, a strategic approach in order to call the attention of the international community to the needs of LFCCs.
- identify common areas of cooperative action through networks, regional projects and other joint efforts, as well as through building partnerships between countries and with international organizations and donors;
- promote research on low forest cover, including social, cultural, economic and environmental aspects;
- formulate long-term approaches and strategies to address issues related to low forest cover;
- devise appropriate follow-up mechanisms to pursue implementation and further development of the outcome of the Tehran meeting;
- identify areas of common interest and synergy for action between low forest cover countries and combating desertification.

6. The open-ended expert meeting met in plenary sessions and in three working groups; the latter reviewed the short- and long-term objectives of the meeting in relation to the following broad topics, which group the areas covered by the background/issues papers (described below in section III, on Issues):

- policy, capacity and social issues
- technical issues
- international issues

7. The conclusions, recommendations and proposed action as appropriate, elaborated in the three working groups, were presented in plenary.

II BACKGROUND

8. Since UNCED, the international debate on forest issues has captured the world's attention and has focused international political interest on the state of the world's forests. While particular concerns of the well-forested countries have been in the forefront of the deliberations in international fora, the concerns of low forest cover countries, the overwhelming majority of which are developing countries, which have been inadequately addressed so far. In these countries scarce forest and wooded lands are particularly significant in terms of their economic, social, cultural, environmental and subsistence values. There has, however, been limited recognition of their needs in the international debate.

9. The fourth session of the IPF addressed the needs and requirements of developing LFCC as one of its programme elements and devoted a full section of its final report to this matter (document E/CN.17/1997/12). The IPF recognized the severity of the economic, social and environmental problems for the well being of people who depend on forests in LFCC, and their consequent negative impact on overall social, economic and environmental conditions. The IPF made a number of recommendations to address the issues associated with ecological conditions as well as with human activities, and emphasized the urgent need for international cooperation, taking into account the sectoral and cross-sectoral dimensions.

10. In identifying the needs of developing countries with low forest cover and unique forest types, it is generally recognized that forests in LFCC provide subsistence to the local people, and are deeply integrated in the fabric of rural societies. The informal, subsistence type of rural economy of environmentally degraded areas with low forest cover is not generally reflected adequately in national economic and development statistics. Only an analysis of the importance of increasingly scarce forest and other wooded lands for the well being of poor rural people will allow the assessment of the true value of these ecosystems and the compelling reasons for investing in them.

11. There is a critical need for international partnerships to manage, conserve and sustainably develop forests, other wooded lands and trees in LFCCs. Generally, LFCCs lack adequate financial and technical capacity, as well as the necessary institutional framework. While most of the resources must come from the countries themselves, additional support and international partnerships are required to make the needed initial investment for the rehabilitation and restoration of degraded forests and other wooded lands.

12. Other critical needs of LFCCs include national capacity for local participation in planning and decision-making, settling land tenure questions, in the improvement of rural infrastructure and improving the status and situation of rural women and indigenous people, including nomads.

13. The mandate of the IFF includes consideration of the needs of developing countries with low forest cover. Specifically, in order that consideration of "international arrangements and mechanisms to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests" is comprehensive and inclusive, the Forum must include consideration of the special needs and requirements of countries with low forest cover and unique forest types.

III ISSUES

14. Issues related to the special problems of low forest cover countries and unique types of forests were addressed in a number of background/issues papers, prepared as a contribution to the discussions of the meeting in plenary and in working groups. The background/issues papers covered the following topics:

- Technical issues
    - role of planted trees and forest plantations in low forest cover countries;
    - forest conservation, in particular unique types of forests;
    - non-wood forest products in low forest cover countries;
    - natural forest management in low forest cover countries;
- Policy, capacity and social issues
    - forests, other wooded lands and trees as a means of subsistence, including poverty, food security and deforestation issues;
    - gender aspects and the role of women in the use of resources and access to forests.
    -

- International issues

  - overview of low forest cover countries in developing regions;
  - trade in forest products in low forest cover countries;
  - forestry in low forest cover countries and the UNCED Conventions;
  - policies and strategic planning and investment for national forest programmes in low forest cover countries;
  - definition of low forest cover.

IV CONCLUSIONS

LFCC: the need for definition and information

15. The expert meeting noted that there were more than 70 developing countries affected by low forest cover, involving perhaps 300 million to 400 million people, yet these countries lack a forum to address common issues and needs. Despite the importance of tree, forest and woodland resources to the environment and economies of these countries, particularly the rural economies, little data and information exist on the extent and condition of the resources and on other factors affecting the forest and range management sectors of these countries. Many of their benefits are largely unquantified and are not reflected in national accounts. Furthermore, although there is a wealth of traditional forest-related knowledge on the management of trees, forests, woodlands, it is largely inaccessible and has not been used in the development of management models for these resources.

16. Notwithstanding the lack of information required to quantify benefits, the meeting recognized that many people depend on trees, forests, woodlands and rangelands for their livelihoods. The meeting also noted that in low forest cover countries there are many examples of unique forests, often representing rare ecosystems, and species and provenances that are genetically adapted to harsh conditions. Agricultural expansion and other human activities threaten this valuable genetic material.

17. There is a strong need for political commitment by individual countries as well as a need for the group of LFCCs to cooperate in addressing special needs and concerns identified during the meeting.

18. The meeting noted that existing definitions of low forest cover countries, notably that used by FAO (which was used *pro tempore* by the meeting for want of any other), do not reflect the range of conditions and needs of low forest cover countries, however they may be defined. Following informal consultations in a contact group under Working Group III, the meeting concluded that a working definition should take into account both low forest cover in a country as a whole, and low forest conditions in locations in certain parts of a country.

19. The meeting appreciated the work carried out by UNEP in collaboration with IUFRO on the subject of new definitions to identify countries with low forest cover. The meeting concluded that this work should be further developed to take into account both LFCCs and low forest conditions within countries.

Policy and institutional development

20. The meeting reviewed existing policies and legislation in LFCCs and concluded that despite new initiatives in several countries in sectoral planning and in the preparation of national forest programmes, policy development and legislation have largely failed to adapt to meet increased demand for forest goods and services. The meeting also noted that the mandate and attitudes of forest administrations and their staff often do not reflect new thinking on people's involvement in forest and range management. Further, forest and range management responsibilities are often fragmented among many institutions, thereby making it difficult to coordinate the effective implementation of national forest programmes. The meeting concluded that there was a need in many LFCCs for institutional reform in matters affecting forests and rangelands, and for capacity building.

21. In reviewing policies affecting forests and rangelands in LFCCs, the meeting noted the need for policy-related provisions in a number of areas including, the involvement of women, and the recognition of the prime importance of non-wood forest products for food security (including income generation) in the livelihoods of rural people.

22. Experience has shown that legally binding instruments can raise the profile of particular issues, and provide the means to implement policy at the highest levels. LFCCs would benefit from a review of such instruments to determine the extent to which they can take advantage of relevant articles that address issues of concern to them, including those related to financial assistance.

23. The meeting recognized that conflicts and international embargoes could seriously affect the ability of countries to prevent degradation and restore degraded forest ecosystems.

The need for participatory processes

24. The group observed that sustainable management of natural forests and plantations and the conservation of unique types of forest are adversely affected by population and other pressures including agricultural expansion, adverse climate, etc. It was therefore concluded that LFCCs should adopt sustainable management strategies that include participatory process, with community and NGO involvement, the sharing of benefits, rural development programmes, decentralized administration, and relevant ecological and social research

Technical issues

25. The meeting agreed that successful development programmes for regeneration, afforestation and reforestation in LFCCs were urgently needed in order to increase forest cover in these countries and to meet their diverse forest product needs, particularly for wood energy.

26. It was observed that LFCCs have a key role to play to facilitate plantation development, particularly in the removal of energy price distortions through subsidies, the reconciliation of potentially conflicting sectoral policies – particularly policies in the agricultural sector, marketing and in market development, and the provision of information related to technology improvements.

27. The application of modern technology and environmentally sound practices in sustainable management, rehabilitation and development of forest and rangeland resources in LFCCs is a critical requirement, which requires high-level political priority and support.

Funding for development of the forestry sector

28. It was further noted that donor assistance in terms of finance and the transfer of appropriate technology would be required to complement the internal efforts of LFCCs.

V RECOMMENDATIONS

The open-ended expert meeting made the following recommendations:

The Tehran Process

29. A new Process is proposed, which would bring together low forest cover countries (including small island states with low forest cover) to address their common issues and needs. It is further proposed that the Process would be known as the *Tehran Process*, to mark the occasion of the first meeting focusing on low forest cover country issues.

30. The Process would provide a forum to address the specific needs of developing countries with low forest cover and to place the issue of LFCCs on the political and policy agenda of future international deliberations. The process should be action-oriented, should secure political support and guidance, and serve as the focus for:

- collection, analysis and dissemination of data and information;
- exchange of information and experience;
- capacity building, especially related to the collection of timely and reliable data and its processing into information and knowledge;
- the quantification of non-marketed goods and services and their reflection in national accounts, including the contribution of trees, forests and woodlands in LFCC to food security;
- the development of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management for LFCCs, benefiting from the existing processes, particularly Dry-zone Africa and the Near East;
- conduct of joint research projects on issues affecting low forest cover countries, particularly the development of models for the management and rehabilitation of natural forests and woodlands;
- the development of a definition of low forest cover that more precisely identifies countries is falling within this category.

Policy, Planning and Institutions

31. It was recommended that forest policy in many LFCC needed to be reviewed, taking into account broader perspectives and the wide variety of needs and demands from society, which can be fulfilled by the forest sector. There is a need to facilitate the building of partnerships to reduce conflicts with other sectors, but also taking into account the environmental, social and human aspects of forest and rangelands to secure the livelihoods of people in rural areas.

32. Increased emphasis is required in developing new policies for the forest sector in the following fields:

- Non-wood forest products
- Increased market orientation of locally-produced forest products
- Services, including the provision of clean water, soil and water conservation with particular reference to fragile ecosystems, desert control, and protection from the effects of wind and water;
- Food security, including the provision of fuelwood, and fodder
- Carbon sequestration
- Conservation and utilization of biological diversity

33. In meeting these new challenges from society, the forest and rangeland sectors should re-define their missions and integrate forest and rangeland policies with other sectors. Institutions concerned with forest and rangelands should be restructured and strengthened in accordance with the newly defined objectives to serve people's needs. Institutional capacity in rural areas needs to be strengthened to support the implementation of policies.

34. National forest programmes could be used as appropriate tools to secure broad participation, noting a special need to secure the participation of women in the management of forest and rangeland resources and in decision-making processes.

35. The meeting also recommended that the report of this meeting be submitted to the COP3 of the CCD to raise the profile of forest and rangeland in NAPs.

Participatory Processes

36. Rehabilitation of forest, woodland, tree and rangeland resources will require the active participation of rural communities.

37. Programmes aiming at reversing deforestation and forest degradation must be formulated and implemented with the effective participation of the concerned population, including local as well as indigenous communities.

38. Participatory approaches should generate income and employment and should be based on existing cultures; they should involve local as well as indigenous communities, with special consideration given to nomadic and transhumant peoples, to forest dwellers and to the role of women and youth. Full use should be made of traditional forest-related knowledge (TFRK).

39. LFCCs should support and facilitate an increased role for non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including providing assistance to:

- strengthen and improve the organization of rural communities;
- strengthen their capacity for planning and decision-making;
- provide technical information and training, and
- formulate and develop national forest programmes.

Funding and Investment

40. Governments should create an enabling environment for investments by individuals, communities and the private sector, such means include offering secure land tenure arrangements and devolution of decision-making power, as well as establishing incentives and removing disincentives, and providing for the sharing of costs and benefits, and for generating income and employment opportunities.

41. LFCCs that are in a position to do so are invited to establish a special fund to assist LFCCs in their efforts to improve sustainable forest management at the regional level.

42. LFCCs are also encouraged to seek funds from the existing provisions of the UN Conventions to meet the needs clearly defined in national forest programmes and in regional strategies. Donor countries are encouraged to increase their ODA to LFCCs for these purposes, with due consideration to avoiding the fragmentation of funding efforts.

43. LFCCs, with the assistance of relevant partners, such as the World Bank, FAO, UNEP, IFAD and UNDP are invited to explore opportunities for further investment in the forest sector, including making the fullest use of possible investment opportunities in forest-related areas arising from multilateral environmental agreements, such as the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD). The Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC), with particular reference to the Kyoto Protocol and its Clean Development Mechanism, should accommodate, in future, afforestation and rehabilitation of degraded lands in LFCCs, taking into account the UNCED decisions on SFM.

Technical Matters

44. Measures should be put in place by LFCC governments to apply or develop suitable technologies related to:

- the management and rehabilitation of natural forest, woodland, trees and rangeland resources, taking into account ecosystem management, the needs of communities (including herders) and their effective involvement in planning and decision-making;
- the recognition of the importance of non-wood forest products in the rural economy, and the need to make provision for the improvement of their quality and for adding local value in their processing, as well as their potential for genetic improvement and development;
- small-scale industries based on wood and non-wood forest products.
- the conservation of examples of natural ecosystems and unique types of forest;
- the establishment of plantations and planted trees, taking into account the matching of species to site and to objectives and the use of indigenous species where possible, as well as the potential of trees and woodlands to ameliorate the urban environment and provide multiple goods and services;
- renewable energy programmes, based on wood, which should include the application of technology to increase efficiency in the utilization of wood energy, and the removal of price disincentives

45. Governments should seek, and donors should provide, assistance for the transfer of appropriate technology and backup support services.

Future international arrangements and mechanisms

46. The special needs and requirements of LFCCs should receive due attention in any new arrangements and mechanisms dealing with forests, including technical and financial assistance related to developing and implementing national forest programmes.

Acknowledgements

47. The participants of the meeting expressed their gratitude to the Government and people of the Islamic Republic of Iran for sponsoring this initiative and for their warm welcome and generous hospitality.